

Neo-Perspectives on Selfie Disorder

'The selfies you don't post are what you really look like'

Irasangappa B.M.

Nursing Tutor, College of Nursing, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Jodhpur, Rajasthan 342005, India.

Abstract

Selfies have become the newest technological trend to take over the youth, due to the wide and easy availability of smartphones. American Psychiatric Association has declared taking selfie as a mental disorder, formally known as selfitis. It is an obsessive compulsive desire to take photos of self and post them on social media as a way to make up for the lack of self-esteem and to fill a gap in intimacy. Selfies are of two types: Individual and group. APA further defines severity of selfie disorder at three levels: borderline, acute and chronic levels. According to experts, taking selfie will not affect a person, unless he or she does addict to it. Since, causes of selfitis are having psychological basis, multi modal therapies like psychopharmacological and psychotherapies are used to treat it effectively.

Keywords: Selfie; Smartphone; Selfitis; Obsessive Compulsive Desire; Social Media; Self-Esteem.

Introduction

The technology has given us a lot of life hacks through its advancement, but the harmful addiction seems to overpower the positive influence of technology on us. The last two decades have witnessed an increase in addiction to social media and its by-products. Smartphones seem to have intruded our lives in a manner that has led us to forget our real selves [1].

Smartphones are developed to serve the multiple functions of day-to-day life of human being, but most

of us will use the smartphones for entertainment purpose, to be specific, for taking photographs (*selfie or groupies*) and also exploring social media.

Selfies have become enormously popular and it is nearly impossible to visit any social media site without seeing our friends' faces in close-up. A selfie is a self-portrait photograph of oneself (or of oneself and other people), taken with a (phone) camera held at arm's length or pointed at a mirror, that is usually shared through social media [2]. Though exact data about the worldwide pervasiveness of selfies are not available, the estimations in existing selfie statistics are impressive. For example, the *Google* statistics in 2014 (Brandt, 2014) reported about 93 billion selfies taken per day—counting only Android phone users [3].

However, taking selfies will not affect the person unless he/she takes it safely and without addicting to it. The experts are not against selfie culture but the statistics make everybody worry about the increasing craze for a perfect shot and the extents to which people are ready to go for it. Many studies have been reported that, people will get addicted to taking selfies when they constantly urge positive responses from the friends on various social media leading to selfitis or selfie disorder.

The American Psychiatric Association has officially confirmed that '*taking selfies*' is a *mental disorder*, which will formally be known as 'Selfitis' [4].

Definition of Selfitis

It is defined as an obsessive compulsive desire to take photos of oneself and post them on social media as a way to make up for the lack of self-esteem and to fill a gap in intimacy [4].

Types

1. *Individual Selfie*: A individual selfie is a self-

Corresponding Author: Irasangappa B.M., Nursing Tutor, College of Nursing, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Jodhpur, Rajasthan 342005, India.
E-mail: ibmudakavi@gmail.com

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portrait photograph of oneself, taken with a smartphone or digital camera held at arm's length or pointed at a mirror, that is usually shared through social media.

2. *Group Selfie (Groufie)*: A groufie is a self-portrait photograph of group of three or more people, taken by a person among the group with a smartphone or digital camera held at arm's length or pointed at a mirror that is usually shared through social media.

Levels of Selfitis

The American Psychiatric Association has further defined the disorder at three levels-

1. *Borderline Selfitis*-Taking photos of oneself at least three times a day but not posting them on social media.
2. *Acute Selfitis*-Taking photos of oneself at least three times a day and posting each one of them on social media.
3. *Chronic Selfitis*-An uncontrollable urge to take photos of oneself round the clock and posting them on social media for more than six times a day [4].

The Dark Triad as Predictors of Selfie Behaviour

The Role of Narcissism, Psychopathy and Machiavellianism

The Dark Triad

The Dark Triad of personalities includes subclinical (i.e., within a normal range of functioning) Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy [5]. The three traits share common threads of deceitfulness, self-promotion, coldness, disagreeableness, exploitation and aggression [6]. The three constructs are conceptually distinct but empirically overlapping personality variables. Clinical personalities refers to those currently under supervision either clinically or forensically [7]. Whereas subclinical samples refer to continuous distributions in broader community samples [8].

Dark Triad

a. Narcissism

Narcissism is marked by a belief that you are smarter, more attractive and better than others are, but with some underlying insecurity. Extreme self-centeredness and a grandiose view of oneself. Narcissists have an excessive need to be admired by others and have a sense of entitlement. They are likely



Fig. 1: The Dark Triad as predictors of selfie behaviour

to agree with statements like: "I am more capable than most people," and "I will usually show off if I get the chance" [9].

b. Psychopathy

Psychopathy involves a lack of empathy and regard for others and a tendency toward impulsive behaviour [10].

c. Machiavellianism

Machiavellianism is one prominent personality trait that is offensive but nonpathological which expresses manipulative tendencies [5] and is based on the acquisition of power.

Treatment

Pharmacotherapy

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has given the green light to Bayer Pharmaceuticals for the marketing of the first drug i.e. Anti selfie pills to cure selfitis, an inflammation of the ego which last year was officially declared a mental disorder by the the



Fig. 2: Anti Selfie Tablets

American Psychiatric Association [11].

FDA announcement unveiled three color coded pills based on three levels of selfitis: Blue pill prescribed for acute selfitis; Red pill prescribed for chronic selfitis; Green pill prescribed for boarder line selfitis [12]. The FDA approval came after successful Phase III clinical trials which showed the new pill's overwhelming safety and efficacy rate of plus or minus 3% in combatting selfies – the taking of photos of one's self and posting them on social media. Because selfitis has become a highly contagious worldwide epidemic, the FDA granted Bayer a fast track approval process. FDA drug approval takes anywhere from 10 to 15 years, but it took just 14 months for Bayer to gain the marketing green light. The new drug comes in pill form and requires a doctor's prescription. Dosage is different for men and women. Men need to take one pill a day while women need 5 pills. Neither Bayer



Fig. 3: Custom Bread Toaster to Cure Selfitis

nor the FDA had any explanation on the dosage discrepancy.

New Stanford study says custom bread toaster can cure selfitis. The new cure is in the form of a selfie toaster which imprints personalized selfie photos on bread slices. The kitchen appliance is manufactured and distributed by Vermont Novelty Toaster Corporation.

The Stanford researchers studied 500 individuals suffering from chronic selfitis and provided them with customized selfie toasters. After just six months of tracking the study participants, researchers found that 75% were cured of selfitis and have totally stopped taking selfies. "We believe that the daily routine of consuming one's self for breakfast creates a

subconscious resolve to keep the ego in check, the researchers concluded [13].

Psychotherapy

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a psychosocial intervention that is the most widely used evidence-based practice for improving mental health. Guided by empirical research, CBT focuses on the development of personal coping strategies that target solving current problems and changing unhelpful patterns in cognitions (e.g. thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes), behaviors, and emotional regulation.

The newly-discovered cure does not involve any drugs or medical treatment – just a simple group therapy. The researchers, after studying hundreds of patients suffering from selfitis, announced that the mental disorder can be immediately cured by participating in group selfies, more popularly known as 'groufies.'

"By participating in group selfies, individuals diagnosed with selfitis can quickly recover from inflammation of their individual or personal ego, leading to a remission of their mental disorder," the researchers said [13].

Special Consideration

The recent article published by Shah, Department of community Medicine, SRMC Chennai, concluded that scientific community all over the world has to come together to some kind of conclusion at the earliest. Almost all internet users or smartphone users have landed up for a selfie at some point of time. Are we going to call all of them as addicted? Can we have some kind of limit criteria for it?

Shah proposed that anything more than 3-5 selfies in a day may be considered as a disease even if not posted on social networking sites. If posting on social networking sites is considered, I is preferred to reduce the number to even 3 per day or lesser. On the basis of amount of time, he proposed that more than 5 minutes per selfie or more than 30 minutes per day may be considered as disease.

On the basis of expectations of the peoples comment, anything more than 2 times logging in a social networking site for comments may be considered as disease. This should be regular activity for almost all days. Where phenomenon is not a regular one, the individual needs further observation and reassessment after some time.

There is also possibility that selfie addiction

disorder may be associated/co-existing with many other psychiatric or mental disorders. Evaluation and management of those will complicate the matter [14].

Conclusion

Smartphone generation should understand the consequences of over use of advancing technology in their day-to-day life. Misuse of smartphones or any technology will result in stressful life because gradually, the people of present generation are abundantly engaging themselves in virtual social media than the real social life and this transformation will lead to emotional instability in their personal and professional life. However, experts say that taking selfie will not affect person unless he or she does it safely and without addicting to it.

Moreover, those who are addicted to selfies must consult the health care provider before developing any secondary psychiatric or mental disorders. There is a strong need of adequate scientific data through research work to develop appropriate treatment strategies for selfie addiction before it affects large population of the world.

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